

News from Hong Kong & Press Conference

Update on anti-WTO detainees 23rd Dec

Saturday 24 December 2005, by [Korean Struggle Mission against Hong Kong WTO Ministerial](#) (Date first published: 23 December 2005).

We welcome the news that all those imprisoned for participating in the WTO demonstrations were granted bail due to the willingness of Hong Kong Bishop Joseph Jin and Chang Dae-Op, a coordinator with the Asia Monitor Resource Center, to stand as guarantee for the defendants. Until the very last minute the Korean consulate refused to act as guaranters for the bail despite strong lobbying efforts in South Korea. However, we will continue with our actions until all of our colleagues return home safely.

On December 23 at 1:00 pm, members of the Korean Struggle Mission held a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Korea, to call for the immediate release of the 14 activists and for a formal apology into the human rights abuse committed by the Hong Kong police during the arrest and imprisonment. Protests will continue everyday from 26th December, in front of the Embassy and also in front of Korean government and/or prime minister's office. At the same time, the Struggle Mission is mobilizing the 839 members who were arrested to write formal complaints to the Hong Kong police for the human rights abuse.

Protests will continue on 26th in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade and also the Chinese Embassy in Seoul, Korea.

Korean Struggle Mission against HK WTO Ministerial

Below is the press statement from 23rd December protest.

Press Statement

On 17th and 18th December, nearly 1,000 persons who were demonstrating in Hong Kong to call for a stop to the WTO ministerial were arrested, and among them 14, including 11 Koreans, have been charged and are still imprisoned in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong authorities have charged them for taking part in an unlawful assembly and are trying to add additional charges such as assaulting police officers and initiating a riot.

However, we cannot but raise the fact that the Hong Kong police used over-repression, seriously abused human rights of detainees, and do not have sufficient evidence to press additional charges against the 14 persons. Therefore, we demand that these 14 persons be released immediately.

The struggle of 17th December was just

In the evening of 17th December, the WTO was undergoing last minute negotiations, the results of which will bring only poverty and destitution to the people of the world. Protestors had come out to the streets and tried to march as close to the convention center as possible, in order to convey to the WTO the voice of the people resisting the vicious cycle of poverty, exploitation and violence brought

on by the WTO regime. The protestors were not armed. However, the police, armed with rubber bullets, electric clubs, tear gas and pepper spray, blocked the bare-handed protestors, and it was during this process that a confrontation broke out and led to many injuries.

The 1,000 persons were undergoing peaceful demonstrations at the time of mass arrests

At early hours of 18th December, the police surrounded the mostly non-Chinese protestors, and blocked those without local identification cards from even going to the toilets. The 1,000 persons, at that time, were sitting on the cold road and were peacefully making speeches, singing and dancing amidst cheers from Hong Kong citizens. However, the police continuously threatened the protestors and at around 3am, started to round them up.

Hong Kong police used over-repression against the protestors including rubber bullets, and during arrests and detention seriously abused human rights of detainees

The Hong Kong police not only used tear gas and pepper spray but also electric clubs, and shot several rubber bullets directly at the protestors. 3 or 4 members of the Korean Struggle Mission were shot and were detained with serious bruising from rubber bullets. Furthermore, the police tied cable ties around the wrists of even those who were not resisting, and one woman who did resist was slapped on the face by a male officer. Many others also testified to have been beaten. Detainees were forced to naked body inspections, while another woman who refused to have her finger printed was thrown to the floor and kicked. People who were injured were arrested directly from the hospital before they had undergone proper treatment. Several police stations rejected visits by lawyers and Korean interpreters, and were denied their basic judicial rights.

There is not enough evidence against the 14 charged

Out of the 14, the Chinese was not even a protestor. The police have not been able to submit sufficient evidence to prove that the 11 Koreans were involved in any kind of violence. In fact, it took 12 hours to arrest all 900 from the streets, and another 24 hours to identify them. It is out of common sense that the police would be able to pinpoint through photographs the 14 within such a short time. We can only say that the reason the prosecutors asked for extension of investigation period and that further charges could not be pressed today at court is because of the lack of evidence.

The indolence of the Korean government and consulate is worsening the situation

We cannot but feel remorse at the fact the Korean consulate, which is responsible for the wellbeing of its nationals, has not been fulfilling its responsibilities until now. The consulate has been turning a deaf ear during the arrests, when detainees were placed in more than a dozen different police stations and also when the police were rejecting lawyers and interpreters. It was after the visit to Hong Kong by the Korean Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade that the Korean consulate felt pressured to visit some of the detainees and provide transportation for the women who were released first. What is more deplorable is that the Korean consulate refused to stand as guarantee for the 11 prisoners and prevented them from being released on bail. We cannot help but compare the attitude of the Korean consulate with that of the Thai that took immediate action to send lawyers to the detainees or the Taiwanese that is willing to bear all legal costs. Furthermore, we have directly witnessed that many officials from the Korean Police Agency and the Intelligence Agency were in Hong Kong during the entire week of actions and suspect that they collaborated in the arrests and pressing of charges.

Yesterday and today, there were many actions around the world in front of Chinese Embassies and also in Hong Kong, to support the actions of the anti-WTO protestors, to condemn the human rights

abuse by police and to call for the release of the prisoners. Contrary to the distorted reports by Korean and Hong Kong media, we know that many Hong Kong people are critical of the over-repression by the police and that they are also calling for the release of the political prisoners.

We demand the following:

- Immediately release the 14 prisoners!
- Punish those police officers who were involved in human rights abuse and apologize!
- Korean government must come up with affirmative measures to protect its nationals!

23rd December, 2005

National Committee to Condemn the Murder of Peasants Jeon Yong Cheol and Hong Deok Pyo

Korean Struggle Mission against Hong Kong WTO Ministerial / People's Action against Neoliberal Globalization